

# THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

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## DISTINGUISHED CZECHOSLOVAK LEADER IN ENGLAND

The Rev. Professor Josef L. Hromadka, Ph.D., a leading representative of the Czechoslovak Evangelical Churches, a minister of the Czech Brethren Evangelical Church, Professor Ordinarius of Systematic Theology at the John Hus Theological Faculty, University of Prague, and former Dean of that Faculty, is visiting England.

When the Nazis occupied Czechoslovakia he accepted an invitation to become Professor of Christian Apologetics at Princeton Theological Seminary. He founded the American-Czechoslovak Christian Fellowship, an organisation analogous to the Anglo-Czechoslovak Christian Fellowship. He is one of the important theological thinkers of the continent of Europe, and he is very well known in the circles of the World Student Christian Federation. During the pre-war period he was a courageous representative of Christian democracy, especially in his monthly paper *Christian Review*.

He is fulfilling a series of important engagements in Britain. This includes giving addresses to the theological faculties of Oxford and Cambridge.

In a lecture at St. Paul's Cathedral on Wednesday, June 16th, Dr. Hromadka said: "Shortly before Munich I received a letter from one of the leading Continental theologians, Karl Barth, the main point of which was an emphatic declaration that every Czech soldier fighting for Czechoslovakia would be fighting for the Church of Jesus Christ. The letter was published, and the Nazi Press burst into fury at Barth's defiant words. Was he right? We have frequently discussed the problem whether ever in history a national and political cause could be identified with the cause of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

"Regardless of our theological hesitation, we may say that in 1938, at that particular moment of European history, Czechoslovakia's fate was closely associated with that of European Christian civilisation, in the same way as during the year June, 1940-June, 1941, the cause of all free humanity depended on Great Britain.

"The boundaries between Czechoslovakia and Germany have in fact become the dividing line between pan-Germanic mystical nationalism and the territory where the main elements of classic Christian tradition in all its implications had been fought for. And the dividing line still exists, even more clearly and decidedly.

"The Churches in Czechoslovakia have for centuries vigorously proclaimed some elements of the Gospel which proved to be an unshakable fortress against any ecclesiastical and political tyranny, against any cult of force, against any nationalistic arrogance and violence, and against any attempt to exempt the political and social order from the authority of the Gospel of Jesus. The supremacy of God, the universal validity of the divine law of justice and righteousness, the highest value of mercy, grace and love for all weak, wretched and unprivileged people—that was always the heart of all our thought and political action, from the earliest times of our history, one thousand years ago, through the Hussite Movement, to the Unity of Brethren and to Masaryk's memorable leadership: Jesus and not Caesar.

"The Churches of Czechoslovakia have been faithful to their great mission and heavenly vision. We are fighting for a free Czechoslovakia in the spirit of assurance that our political freedom will facilitate our great spiritual mission in Europe and the whole world."

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## NO RELAXATION BY DUTCH CHURCHES

Following closely on the protests made by the Dutch Leaders against compulsory deportation of labour, further courageous action was taken by the Dutch Churches. The Leaders of nine Christian denominations combined to send to the Reichskommissar Seyss-Inquart the following letter. Its joint character and its outspoken language combine to make it a document of outstanding importance. We publish the full text:

"After many previous events during the occupation years which have forced the Netherlands Churches to complain to your Excellency, notably with regard to the question of our Jewish citizens, something so terrible is now taking place, that we cannot desist from addressing these words in the name of Our Lord, to your Excellency. We have already complained about several acts on the part of the occupying power. These acts clash with the spiritual principles of our people, who ever since their birth (as a nation) have at least attempted, together with their Government, to live in accordance with God's word. A beginning has now been made with the sterilisation of so-called mixed marriages. But God, Who created Heaven and Earth and Whose Commandments apply to all men and to Whom your Excellency, too, must give account one day, told men: 'Make thee fruitful and multiply thee' (Genesis 28). Sterilisation means physical and spiritual mutilation directly at variance with the divine Commandment that we shall not dishonour, hate, wound or kill our neighbours. Sterilisation means the violation of the divine Commandment as well as human rights. It is the last consequence of the anti-Christian racial doctrine which destroys nations, and of self-exaltation without bounds. It represents a view on the world and on life that undermines all real Christian existence, making it ultimately impossible.

"You, your Excellency, are for the moment the highest *de facto* political authority in the Netherlands. As things are you are entrusted with the maintenance of order and law in the country. You are entrusted with this not only by the Führer of the German Reich, but also through the inscrutable dispensation of God, Whom the Christian Church proclaims on earth. To you apply, exactly as to all other men, and to you especially because you happen to be placed in this high office, the Commandments of this Lord and Judge of the entire earth.

"Therefore the Christian Churches of the Netherlands, ordered by God and in accord-

ance with His Word, say to your Excellency: It is your Excellency's duty to stop the shameful practice of sterilisation. We have no illusions. We are well aware that we can hardly expect your Excellency to heed the voice of the Church, that is the voice of the Gospel, that is the voice of God. But what we cannot hope for as a human achievement, we dare to hope for in our faith in Christ. The living God has power to convert and to change your Excellency's heart. For that, too, we pray to God for the good of your Excellency and our suffering people."

The letter is signed by:

P. de Bruyn, President, Netherlands Reformed Church; H. J. Dyckmeester, Deputy Secretary, Netherlands Reformed Church; J. de Jong, Roman Catholic Church; A. I. Rutgers, Calvinist Churches; G. W. van Doth, Calvinist Churches in restored union; H. Janssen, Christian Calvinist Church; F. K. Kleyn, Remonstrant Brotherhood; S. N. B. Halbertsma, Baptist Society; H. Grottendieck, Evangelical Lutheran Church; W. J. F. Meiners, Restored Evangelical Lutheran Church.

## BRITISH CHURCHES GREET DUTCH CHURCH LEADERS

The British Council of Churches through its Executive Committee under the chairmanship of the Bishop of London has passed the following resolution:

"We desire to express our sympathy with the Churches of Holland in the stand they have made both in regard to the persecution of the Jews and the attempt to impose anti-Semitic legislation in Holland, and also in the face of the recent and terrible invasion of the liberties of the Dutch people. British Christians have watched with admiration the defence of Christian principles and standards so bravely offered by the Churches of Holland."

## ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY'S SERMON AT INTERNATIONAL SERVICE

(Owing to the Whitsun holiday, this item could not be included last week, but it is given now, especially for the benefit of overseas readers.—Ed.)

A United Service of International Christian Witness, organised by the British Council of Churches was once more held in Westminster Abbey on Whit Sunday afternoon, June 13th. It attracted a great congregation and the Abbey was well filled.

Representatives of the Anglican, Presby-



terian and Free Churches in Great Britain and of the Evangelical Churches of Africa, Canada, China, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Formosa, France, Germany, India and the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland and of the United States of America, as well as of the Orthodox Churches of Armenia, Greece, Russia, Roumania and Serbia took part in the procession.

The address was given by the Archbishop of Canterbury, who took as his subject the contrast between the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel and the mutual understanding recorded in the story of Pentecost. In the course of his address the Archbishop said:

"The nations have developed through their differences from one another and even through their conflicts a wealth of inheritance for the civilised world which certainly has come to us through those channels and perhaps could not have been so richly developed otherwise. But the great need of our time is to find the power which shall gather all this diversity into a harmony where every distinct element has its place yet the whole is a unity and rivalry never becomes conflict.

"It was on such an errand of reconciliation that the Church was sent forth on its age-long pilgrimage. During its history we can see the working of its power to draw men into unity, then new outbreaks of divisiveness leading on the one hand to strife and on the other to still richer variety of human experience, and then once more the influence of the Church in unification. Wherever Christian people are with one accord in one place they can so speak of the wonderful works of God that all men of all traditions hear and understand.

"It can be so to-day. It is so already to an extent that amazes those who know the facts. The actual fellowship of Christians of various ecclesiastical traditions and of almost all nations, including those at war with one another, is the supreme spiritual fact of our epoch. Chinese and Japanese; American, British and German; so far as we acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ and turn our thoughts to the wonderful works wrought by God in Him, we find ourselves united at a level of experience deeper than the estrangements even of this war. Here is the greatest hope for the future. We shall need political contrivances, and Christians should to the utmost extent exercise their minds on the problems involved so that Christian influence may tell in the fashioning of the outward structure of international life when the war is over. But that structure can in any

case be no more than machinery. The vital matter is the spirit which will both keep the machinery at work, and will also direct it to the accomplishment of certain ends and the repudiation of others.

"Here the responsibility of the Christian fellowship is very great. We are the trustees of the great secret; we are called to be witnesses to those truths which are the well-spring of reconciling and unifying power. It is not in ourselves nor in our several ecclesiastical traditions that we find this power; it is in the wonderful works of God. Our address to the nations as members of the Church of Christ planted within them and among them must always be 'We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. . . . God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. . . . We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were intreating by us; we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God.'

"We do our duty as we see it, and this may involve the infliction upon our fellow-men of very fearful suffering; and we brace ourselves to bear such suffering if duty calls us to endure it. Only so in the state of things which has arisen can a hideous evil be driven from the seat of power which it has usurped and the world be set free to follow again the way of fellowship. And if it is our duty to fight, it is certainly our duty to fight effectively. But we must guard our souls from the temptation which this inevitably brings. Our word of reconciliation is a world of mutual forgiveness unto seventy times seven."

### "DESERT RATS" AT CHURCH

We quote the following extracts from an Army Padre's account of a Service with the so-called "Desert Rats."

"I suggested a Service, and the offer was accepted with alacrity. When the time came, although the 7th Armoured Troops Workshops, R.E.M.E., were extremely busy, there was an excellent attendance and the Holy Communion, which followed, was partaken of by a most gratifying number, including officers, warrant-officers, N.C.O.s and men. In view of the fact that almost immediately afterwards the 7th were due to attend a 'Griff' Lecture, this effort on their part was admirable. It went to show, once more, that the men up here, very close indeed to the front line—perhaps four miles as an aeroplane flies—are keen on maintaining their old traditions.

"The day before they, like your correspondent, who was in the neighbourhood, had



been subjected to a vicious air-raid; in point of fact, this unit had another in the afternoon. Two men were wounded, and one officer had an amazingly narrow escape, when a piece of shrapnel, probably a bomb-splinter, crashed into his truck before he could get out, went whizzing through and out via the windscreen.

"In the workshops one found an amazing variety of trades all actively at work. So active were they, in point of fact, that the Colonel, willing as he was to have a Service, had to put it off from the Sunday to the Monday. But in many ways one day out here is like another; and even a parson has to consult his diary or his driver or his other friends to make sure he hasn't slipped over the Day of Rest. For you can see there is no Day of Rest in the Desert. To 'Desert Rats' Sunday has to be kept when it can.

"None the less, on Monday, when they were just a shade less busy, I held my Services. One fellow played an accordion, and we sang the old hymns which soldiers love; the Colonel read the lesson and his fellow officers, together with warrant-officers and men, stood around. It was an impressive occasion, because, apart from the fact that we all had to keep an eye open for sudden unwelcome aircraft, it was clear that these 7th Armoured Workshops people, whose very life makes them as 'tough' as any in the Desert, were keen on 'paying their vows.' From the Regimental Sergeant-Major downwards, the congregation was representative.

"From the Army Commander of the noble Eighth, down his long line of able generals

and leaders, we have a marvellous incentive. The rank and file respond excellently. They set a very fine example; and if the whole of the Middle East Forces follow it we can look forward to the days of peace.

"I left this Unit feeling that England has got the right attitude, one of fearless resolution to see the thing through, coupled with dependence upon Almighty God."

## PASTORS ARRESTED IN FRANCE

Evidence has reached us from several sources that Protestant Pastors in France have been the victims of recent drastic action by the Gestapo. The most striking case was that of a Swiss Pastor, Roland Depury, who was arrested at Lyons by the Gestapo as he was about to begin a Service. He was led off in his robes, bundled into a police car, and has not been heard of since. The Alsatian Pastor, Schwender, had been arrested the previous night (he is now said to have been set free). In all seven Pastors are said to have been arrested.

The Roman Catholic Church also continues to play an important part in the resistance movement in France. Three French Cardinals have published a letter expressing their concern at the moral and spiritual dangers presented by the compulsory labour service. The letter speaks of the efforts that have been made to mitigate the difficulties and dangers of compulsory deportation, and concludes:—"We have had no satisfaction, but we will not cease to demand a right which we consider sacred."